



## **News Release**

**For Immediate Release:**

Thursday, June 15, 2006

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### **Cannon Health Building Employees Celebrate 20 Years of Public Health Milestones**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – When the Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon building was dedicated in 1986, the news of the Challenger space shuttle loss had recently rocked the world. The Nation was just stumbling upon a spree of over-the-counter pain killer product tampering and Top Gun was one of the year's top movies. Today, employees of the Cannon Building gathered to celebrate two decades of public health advancements and pay tribute to the building's namesake, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon.

“Completion of the Cannon building was an exciting step for Utah,” said Richard Melton, deputy director, Utah Department of Health (UDOH). “It was built for a total cost of \$15.8 million and took just under two years to complete. As the home of most of the UDOH programs, it's fitting that the Cannon building was the first state government building in Utah to be designated entirely smoke free.”

As part of today's festivities, Cannon building employees fired off two cannons, one for each decade of public health milestones reached over the past twenty years. In addition, employees were invited to walk the neighboring Gold Medal Mile fitness trail near the Cannon building which had been lined with markers commemorating key milestones in Utah's public health history.

At the dedication of the Cannon building 20 years ago, Dr. Dandoy, state health director at that time said, “It is most fitting that the Department of Health's new building should be named for such a prominent figure in public health history in Utah. I am very glad that our new building will be named after such a pioneer in the state's public health programs.

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This is an extremely appropriate and fitting tribute to a physician, a woman and a great Utahn.”

Martha Hughes Cannon was an outspoken advocate of public health. She was the first woman state senator in the United States and helped establish the first State Board of Health in Utah, upon which she served for several years. Cannon was also known for her involvement in the women’s suffrage movement taking part in both national and local efforts.

In her teen years, Cannon showed her individualism by cutting off her long hair so she would not have to waste a lot of time “fixing it.” She also believed that the heavy hair on her head was unhealthy. This shocked many of her friends and co-workers as it was not fashionable for a young woman to have short hair.

As a state senator, Cannon introduced many bills related to public health, the first of which made education of visual and hearing impaired children at the state school mandatory. Other legislation established Utah’s first State Board of Health and “An Act to Protect the Health of Women and Girl Employees,” required those employing female clerks to provide something for their female employees to sit on when not working.

In her second term, Cannon sponsored legislation entitled, “An Act Providing for the Teaching in Public Schools of the Effects of Alcoholic Drinks and Narcotics on the Human System” – one of Utah’s earliest drug and alcohol curriculums. Subsequent legislation addressed quarantine rules and regulations and other measures as prescribed by the newly formed board of health.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*